

# Predicative definite NPIs in Norwegian\*

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## Abstract:

In Norwegian, a weak quantifier or a scalar adjective with a positive value may combine with a definite noun and thereby form an attenuating NPI. These phrases, which I call predicative definite NPIs, are exceptional as nominal phrases, since they do not accept a prenominal definiteness marker despite their overall definiteness, and they are exceptional as attenuating NPIs, since they are templatic instead of being lexically defined.

The reason why predicative definite NPIs do not accept prenominal definiteness markers is arguably that there is no D head. The absence of a D head makes the phrases defective in their ability to refer. Hence, they are semantically predicative, and in the terms of Giannakidou (1998) they are referentially dependent, which is a property that characterises many NPIs in general. Hence, the lack of a D head causes the phrases to be NPIs, despite their definiteness.

Concerning their licensing properties, when three influential theories of NPI-licensing—Progovac (1994), van der Wouden (1997) and Giannakidou (1998)—are confronted with the NPIs discussed here, it appears that Giannakidou's model more successfully than the others can capture the licensing of predicative definite NPIs, although some refinement is required even here.

## 1. Introduction

In Norwegian, there is a construction where a nominal phrase consisting of a weak quantifier or an adjective, plus a noun with a suffixed definite article but without a prenominal determiner, appears in negative contexts. Some examples of this rather peculiar construction are shown in (1).

- (1)a. Ho var ikkje stor-e jent-a.  
*she was not big-DEF girl-DEF*  
 'She was no big girl.'
- b. Vi gikk ikkje lang-e tur-en.  
*we walked not long-DEF trip-DEF*  
 'We did not walk a long distance.'

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- c. Dei sa ikkje mange<sup>1</sup> ord-a.  
*they said not many word-DEF.PL*  
 ‘They did not say many words.’
- d. Ein rapport er venta om ikkje mange dag-ane.  
*a report is expected in not many day-DEF.PL*  
 ‘A report is expected in not many days.’

As we see, these nominal phrases can be predicates, as in (1a), arguments, as in (1b) and (1c), or parts of adverbials, as in (1d).

Nominal phrases of the type exemplified in (1) are negative polarity items (NPis). If the negation is left out, the clause becomes ungrammatical, as shown in (2).

- (2)a. \* Ho var store jenta.  
*she was big.DEF girl.DEF*
- b. \* Vi gikk lange turen.  
*we walked long.DEF trip.DEF*
- c. \* Dei sa mange orda.  
*they said many word.DEF.PL*
- d. \* Ein rapport er venta om mange dagane.  
*a report is expected in many day.DEF.PL*

But crucially, without a quantifier or adjective the phrases in (1) and (2) do not display polarity sensitivity. What we have then is ordinary definite nouns, which would be perfectly acceptable in positive as well as in negative contexts, as shown in (3).

- (3)a. Ho var (ikkje) jenta.  
*she was not girl.DEF*  
 ‘She was (not) the girl.’
- b. Vi gikk (ikkje) turen.  
*we walked not trip.DEF*  
 ‘We walked/did not walk the trip.’
- c. Dei sa (ikkje) orda.  
*they said not word.DEF.PL*  
 ‘They said/did not say the words.’

<sup>1</sup> There is no morphological distinction between indefinite and definite in the quantifier *mange* ‘many’.

Norwegian NPIs of the type shown in (1) have however not been much recognised in the linguistic literature. Faarlund, Lie & Vannebo (1997:302) give three examples where phrases of this type appear as predicates, and suggest that the construction is restricted to nominal predicates in negated clauses, which is obviously not the case. To my knowledge, the only work where the construction is discussed in some detail is Johannessen (1997), a paper which still remains unpublished.

Since it has attracted very little attention in the literature, the construction has no established name. For reasons that will be clear as we proceed I will use the term *predicative definite NPI*. And as we will see, the construction has very interesting properties and deserves to be taken seriously. Firstly, there is the templatic nature of this phrase type. From the literature on NPIs one gets the impression that NPIs are normally built around certain lexical items. Nevertheless, no particular lexical item is required to make an expression into a predicative definite NPI. Instead, it is the form of the nominal phrase as a whole that matters. Hence, it seems that these NPIs are exceptional in this respect.

Secondly, the definiteness marking of predicative definite NPIs is unusual, in that a suffixed definiteness marker is obligatory present whereas a prenominal definiteness marker is obligatory absent. This raises the question of how the semantics of these nominal phrases should be accounted for.

In the following treatment of the predicative definite NPI construction in Norwegian I will first, in section 2, give some more examples in order to establish that it really is templatic of nature. In section 3 I take a closer look at its semantic properties, and conclude that it is an attenuating NPI with a positive scalar value, according to the classification system proposed by Israel (1996, 2001, 2004). In addition, it is conventionally associated with understatement.

Then in section 4 I deal with the internal syntax of predicative definite NPIs. I conclude that despite the obligatory definiteness marking on the head noun, these phrases lack a D head. The suffixed definiteness marker represents a head lower down in the syntactic structure, which cannot make the phrase referential in the absence of D. As we will see, this is the reason why the phrases are NPIs.

The external syntax of the predicative definite NPIs is investigated in sections 5 and 6. In section 5 I look at which positions in the clause they can appear in. One conclusion is that they must be in the scope of their licenser, unless they have moved out of that scope by A-bar-movement; another is that they cannot appear as surface subjects. I connect this to their

inability to refer, which makes them more restricted in their distribution than certain other Norwegian NPis.

The topic of section 6 is the licensing of predicative definite NPis. It turns out that the exact range of licensors that are compatible with these NPis is not predicted by any of the current theories of NPI licensing. Consequently, the predicative definite NPis shows that these theories need to be revised or perhaps replaced.

It should however be borne in mind that since this particular type of NPI has never before been dealt with in much detail in the literature, not even descriptively, the main purpose of this paper is to identify the properties of the construction rather than providing explanations for all of them. Hence, a number of questions might be left unresolved.

## 2. A templatic NPI

The first property of the predicative definite NPI to be noted here is that the quantifier or adjective must represent the positive part of a scale. To take the construction in (1b) as an example, it becomes ungrammatical if the adjective *lang* ‘long’ is replaced by *kort* ‘short’, as in (4a). Instead, the intended meaning of (1a) must be expressed by means of an ordinary indefinite nominal phrase following the negation, as in (4b), or by replacing the negation and the nominal phrase with a nominal phrase introduced by a negative quantifier, as in (4c).

- (4)a. \* Vi gikk ikkje korte turen.  
           *we walked not short.DEF trip.DEF*  
           Intended meaning: ‘We did not walk a short distance.’
- b. Vi gikk ikkje noen kort tur.  
    *we walked not any short trip*  
    ‘We did not walk a short distance.’
- c. Vi gikk ingen kort tur.  
    *we walked no short trip*  
    ‘We walked no short distance.’

Another property, which I have already mentioned, of the predicative definite NPI is that it is not associated with any particular lexical item. Many different combinations of adjective or quantifier and noun are possible, as long as the adjective or quantifier denotes a positive scalar value.

The following selection of authentic examples, taken from *The Oslo Corpus of Tagged Norwegian Texts*, will serve to illustrate this fact:<sup>2</sup>

- (5)a. Det vara ikkje lange stunda så kom tante Gerd.  
*it lasted not long.DEF while.DEF then came aunt Gerd*  
 ‘It did not take long before auntie Gerd arrived.’
- b. Det er ikkje lange avstanden mellom jernbanestasjonen  
*it is not long.DEF distance.DEF between railway.station.DEF*  
 og bussterminalen.  
*and bus.terminal.DEF*  
 ‘There is not a long distance between the railway station and the bus terminal.’
- c. Ho fekk ikkje store trøysta.  
*she got not big.DEF comfort.DEF*  
 ‘She didn’t get much comfort.’
- d. Jeg har egentlig ikke store ambisjonene.  
*I have really not big.DEF/PL ambitions.DEF*  
 ‘I don’t really have big ambitions.’
- e. Han var ikke gamle karen før han løftet hodet.  
*he was not old.DEF chap.DEF before he lifted head.DEF*  
 ‘He was not an old chap when he held his head up.’
- f. Det er ikke mange hjemmekampene han har gått glipp av.  
*it is not many home.games.DEF he has missed*  
 ‘He has not missed many home games.’

We see that there is variation with respect to the adjective/quantifier and with respect to the noun. Hence, it is the construction as a whole that is the NPI. And the construction is productive—it may be formed from new combinations of lexical items. In (6) I show some perfectly acceptable examples that I made up:

- (6)a. Dei har ikkje høge fjella i Danmark.  
*they have not high.DEF/PL mountains.DEF in Denmark*  
 ‘They don’t have very high mountains in Denmark.’
- b. Ho skreiv ikkje tjukke bøkene.  
*she wrote not thick.DEF/PL books.DEF*  
 ‘She did not write thick books.’

<sup>2</sup> The examples (5a)-(5c) are written in Nynorsk, whereas the examples in (5d)-(5f) are written in Bokmål. This is however just a matter of orthography and of no further significance here.

- c. Han har ikkje store formuen.  
*he has not big.DEF fortune.DEF*  
 ‘He has no big fortune.’

From the literature on NPis one gets the impression that NPis tend to be lexicalised, which is clearly not the case with the predicative definite NPi. In this respect, the construction seems to be exceptional—unless NPis in general are formed productively to a larger extent than normally recognised.<sup>3</sup>

The examples in (7), on the other hand, are not well formed.<sup>4</sup> As a rule, adjectives that denote a dimension in space or time are more acceptable in predicative definite NPis than those that do not.<sup>5</sup> This conclusion is further supported by (7c), which is considerably worse than (6c), even though the two mean more or less the same.

- (7)a. \* Det var ikkje fine huset.  
*it was not nice.DEF house.DEF*  
 Intended meaning: ‘It was no nice house.’
- b. \* Ho var ikkje intelligente jenta.  
*she was not intelligent.DEF girl.DEF*  
 Intended meaning: ‘She was no intelligent girl.’
- c. ?\* Han er ikkje rike karen.  
*he is not rich.DEF chap.DEF*  
 Intended meaning: ‘He is no rich chap.’

<sup>3</sup> Janne Bondi Johannessen (p.c.) suggests that minimising NPis can be formed productively. If so, the predicative definite NPis are not so exceptional among NPis in general, only among maximising NPis. On the other hand, Giannakidou (1998:37) states that “minimizers generally have the hallmark of idioms”, which I take to mean that minimisers are normally lexicalised. Whether or not this is true will have to be established through empirical investigations in various languages.

<sup>4</sup> Thanks to Janne Bondi Johannessen for providing the examples in (7ab) and in (8).

<sup>5</sup> There is a notable exception to this generalisation. The adjective *rar*, which ultimately comes from Latin *rarus*, can appear in predicative definite NPis, as exemplified in (i) and (ii):

- (i) Ho fekk ikkje rare honoraret.  
*she got not rar.DEF payment.DEF*  
 ‘She didn’t get much of a payment.’
- (ii) Det var ikkje rare greiene.  
*it was not rar.DEF things.DEF*  
 ‘It wasn’t much to speak about.’

Outside of predicative definite NPis, Norwegian *rar* means ‘odd, strange’. Its meaning in predicative definite NPis seems to be closer to ‘highly valued’ or ‘very fine’, which are possible meanings of English *rare* and also have been within the semantic range of Scandinavian *rar* (see *Svenska Akademiens ordbok*, column R317). In any case, it seems that *rar* in predicative definite NPis-constructions can denote quality as well as extension or amount.

The examples in (8ab) are however also out. This fact indicates that there is a further restriction on the adjectives that appear in predicative definite NPIs: they must refer to a positive value on a scale without specification or qualification.

- (8)a. \* Ho var ikkje kjempe-store jenta.  
*she was not giant-big.DEF girl*  
 Intended meaning: ‘She was no enormously big girl.’
- b. \* Ho skreiv ikkje meter-tjukke bøkene.  
*she wrote not meter-thick.DEF/PL books.DEF*  
 Intended meaning: ‘She did not write yard-thick books.’

The exception is modifiers like *særlig* and *spesielt*, both meaning ‘especially’. These modifiers may well appear in predicative definite NPIs:

- (9)a. Ho var ikkje særlig store jenta.  
*she was not especially big.DEF girl.DEF*  
 ‘She was no especially big girl.’
- b. Vi gikk ikkje spesielt lange turen.  
*we walked not especially long.DEF trip.DEF*  
 ‘We did not walk an especially long distance.’

I will leave aside the search for a more precise formulation of the restrictions on modifiers that may appear in predicative definite NPIs. I will instead take a closer look at the meaning of the construction itself.

### 3. The meaning of predicative definite NPIs

My analysis of the meaning of the Norwegian predicative definite NPIs will start from the classification of polarity items in Israel (1996, 2004), and in particular Israel (2001). In the terms of Israel (2001), polarity items are either *emphatic*, serving to strengthen the force of the utterance, or *attenuating*, in which case they weaken the force of the utterance. In addition, they refer either to high scalar values or to low scalar values. And typically, an emphatic polarity item with a low scalar value is an NPI, whereas an emphatic polarity item with a high scalar value is a positive polarity item—a PPI. Conversely, attenuating polarity items with a low scalar value tend to be PPIs, while attenuating polarity items with a high scalar value are normally NPIs. For clarity, this pattern is shown in Table 1, along with some English examples of each type of polarity item.

Scalar value	EMPHATIC	ATTENUATING
HIGH	PPIs: <i>tons, awfully, as hell</i>	NPIs: <i>much, long, all that</i>
LOW	NPIs: <i>a wink, at all, a red cent, the least bit</i>	PPIs: <i>a tad, sorta, rather, somewhat</i>

Table 1: Classification of polarity items (adapted from Israel 2001:303)

Many, perhaps most, polarity items fit into one of the four cells in Table 1, which is why Israel (2001) refers to these types collectively as *canonical* polarity items. He points out, though, that polarity items of other types also exist. For example, there are NPIs that are emphatic—they strengthen the negation—and encode a high scalar value, in contrast with emphatic low scalar value NPIs like *a wink*. Since the latter are often referred to as *minimisers* (with a term introduced in Bolinger 1972), emphatic high scalar value NPIs might appropriately be called *maximisers*. Two of the examples of maximisers given by Israel (2001) are shown (in italics) in (10).

- (10)a. *Wild horses* couldn't keep me away.  
 b. I wouldn't do it *for all the tea in China*.

If we now consider the Norwegian predicative definite NPI in light of Israel's classification of polarity items, it is clear that this construction always represents, if not necessarily a high scalar value, so at least a positive value—this was stated already in the introduction to this paper. However, an anonymous reviewer suggests that the relevant property of the polarity items in the upper row of Table 1 is that they encode a positive value, and not necessarily the upper end of the scale. This means that predicative definite NPIs also belong in the upper row of Table 1 rather than in the lower row. The question is then which rhetoric function does it have: is it emphatic or attenuating?

Let us first observe that the intended meaning of the predicative definite NPI as a whole tends to be that a value in the lower part of the scale holds true. For example, a natural interpretation of the utterance in (1a), repeated here as (11), is not only that she was not big, but in fact that she was quite small:

- (11) Ho var ikkje store jenta.  
*she was not big.DEF girl.DEF*  
 'She was no big girl [but in fact quite small].'



The same effect is seen in the authentic examples (12) and (13) (also from *The Oslo Corpus of Tagged Norwegian Texts*). In (12), the context shows that the first clause is meant to convey that Zhirinovsky's chances are small, and in (13), we understand that Periander said very little.

- (12) Sjirinovskij har ikkje store sjansane. Folk er lei  
*Zhirinovsky has not big.DEF/PL chances.DEF people are tired*  
 av galenskapen hans  
*of madness.DEF his*  
 'Zhirinovsky's chances are not big. People are tired of his  
 madness.'
- (13) Periander sa ikkje mange orda. Han tenkte berre  
*Periander said not many words.DEF he thought only*  
 på sitt.  
*on POSS.REFL*  
 'Periander did not say many words. He was only thinking about his  
 own business.'

It does not follow, though, that the predicative definite NPI in itself necessarily encodes the stronger statement. Of relevance here is the discussion of *litotes* in van der Wouden (1996, 1997). Litotes is the rhetoric figure where an affirmative statement is expressed by means of the negation of the opposite, and it necessarily involves scalar concepts, since only scalar concepts allow us to draw positive inferences from a negative statement. Hence, a predicative definite NPI exemplifies litotes. But as van der Wouden points out, there are two competing views on the semantics of litotes. According to what I will call the stronger interpretation, the meaning of litotes constructions is quite the opposite of their non-negated counterparts, so that the middle area between the two extreme ends of the scale is excluded. On this view, saying that someone is "not very smart" amounts to claiming that the person is in fact stupid. According to the other view, which I will call the weaker interpretation, a litotes expression also allows an interpretation where the property ascribed to the subject lies somewhere between the two extremes of the relevant scale, so that saying that someone is "not very smart" allows the interpretation that the person in question has average to low intelligence. Van der Wouden himself is more sympathetic to the latter view, and suggests that in cases where a litotes construction is used to express the opposite of what is negated, to the exclusion of the middle part of the scale, this is due to *understatement*, which is an independent mechanism.

Now if the stronger interpretation of litotes is correct, predicative definite NPis are emphatic; they strengthen the negation. Since they also refer to the positive region of the scale, the only class of NPis they could belong to is the maximiser class—the emphatic positive scalar value NPis. But clearly, predicative definite NPis do not look like maximisers. Maximisers typically express the unlikelihood of some event by describing a situation where the event would be maximally likely to occur and then stating that it will not occur even under those maximally favourable circumstances. This is not what predicative definite NPis mean. Moreover, it can be shown that predicative definite NPis are not emphatic. Just like English *even*, discussed in Israel (1996), the Norwegian focusing particle *eingong* encodes an emphatic information value (see Lindstad 1999:16). But unlike *even*, *eingong* is itself an NPI, so that it can only be used to test the emphatic value of negated clauses. Nevertheless, since predicative definite NPis are also NPis, the test we want can be constructed with *eingong*.

Note first that *eingong* may well combine with minimisers, as in (14), and with maximisers, as in (15).

- (14) Det kostar ikkje eit raudt øre eingong.  
*it costs not a red cent even*  
 ‘It does not even cost a red cent.’
- (15) Ikkje eingong ti ville hestar kunne halde meg innandørs.  
*not even ten wild horses could keep me indoors*  
 ‘Not even wild horses could keep me indoors.’

*Eingong* is also much better in (16a) than in (16b), which serves to demonstrate that just like *even*, it is better with relatively remarkable claims than with relatively trivial claims—see the discussion of *even* in Israel (1996:638). In other words, *eingong* requires an emphatic information value.

- (16)a. Harry gikk ikkje den kortaste løypa eingong.  
*Harry walked not the shortest.DEF track.DEF even*  
 ‘Harry did not walk even the shortest track.’
- b. # Harry gikk ikkje den lengste løypa eingong.  
*Harry walked not the longest.DEF track.DEF even*  
 ‘Harry did not walk even the longest track.’

But strikingly, combined with a predicative definite NPI *eingong* is not just less acceptable; it is completely impossible:

- (17)a. \* Ho var ikkje store jenta eingong.  
*she was not big.DEF girl.DEF even*
- b. \* Vi gikk ikkje lange turen eingong.  
*we walked not long.DEF trip.DEF even*

This shows that predicative definite NPIs are not emphatic. They are not maximisers but instead attenuating NPIs—recall that NPIs encoding a positive value on a scale are either maximisers or attenuating NPIs. The fact that a predicative definite NPI can be followed up by a stronger claim, as shown in (18), points in the same direction:

- (18) Ho var ikkje store jenta, ho var berre to år.  
*she was not big.DEF girl.DEF she was only two years*  
 ‘She was no big girl, she was only two years old.’

It is typical for attenuating NPIs that they can be followed up by a stronger statement, while emphatic NPIs do not allow this (see Israel 1996:633).

We must conclude that Norwegian predicative definite NPIs are attenuating NPIs with a positive scalar value, which means that they belong to the same class as *much*. This might seem a bit surprising, since the attenuating NPIs mentioned in Israel (1996, 2001) are degree expressions, and not whole nominal phrases. On the other hand, we can now understand why modifiers like *særlig* ‘especially’ and *spesielt* ‘especially’, both shown in (9), are compatible with predicative definite NPIs. These modifiers are also attenuating NPIs with a positive scalar value, and consequently, they do not alter the overall semantics of the predicative definite NPI.

Another conclusion that can be drawn from the discussion in this section is that van der Wouden is right about litotes: it does not necessarily exclude the middle value. As the weaker interpretation of litotes predicts, predicative definite NPIs do not logically entail that the lower part of the scale holds true. Nevertheless, native speakers tend to have the intuition that a predicative definite NPI involves exactly this scalar implicature. This intuition suggests that although the literal meaning of the predicative definite NPI is simply a denial that a quantifier or a scalar adjective representing a positive value on a scale holds true, the pragmatic use of the construction habitually involves understatement, giving the listener the understanding that a value in the lower part of the scale is picked out instead. This is probably also what lies behind the claim in Johannessen (1997) that the positive scalar elements seen in predicative definite NPIs are used ironically.

Having reached this conclusion, it is interesting to note that attenuating positive value NPis seem to be closely connected to understatement more generally. For one thing, Israel (1996) refers to these NPis as “understaters”, and he suggests that they regularly appear in understatements, where less is said than actually meant. He gives the examples shown here as (19ab), with the minimiser *a wink* and the understater or attenuating NPI *much* (his examples (10ab), p. 625):

- (19)a. Margo didn't sleep *a wink* before her big test.
- b. Margo didn't sleep *much* before her big test.

Israel then comments on these examples as follows:

Intuitively, the difference between these sentences is obvious: [(19a)] makes a strong claim by denying that Margo slept even the smallest amount imaginable; [(19b)] makes a weak claim by denying only that Margo slept for a long time. In [(19a)], *a wink* marks a low, in fact a minimal, quantitative value and produces an emphatic sentence; in [(19b)], *much* marks a relatively high quantitative value and produces an understatement. (Israel 1996:625-626)

I agree with Israel on this point. Although (19b) literally denies only that Margo slept for a long time, it would normally not be uttered in order to convey exactly that. For example, if Margo normally sleeps eight hours every night, sleeping *much* for her would mean sleeping more than eight hours, perhaps nine or ten. Hence, if she sleeps exactly eight hours she does not sleep *much*. But that situation would not normally be reported as in (19b). In most cases, (19b) would be used to express that Margo slept significantly less than she normally does. Hence, it seems that the attenuating NPI *much* by convention goes along with understatement—or we might say that it does so in the pragmatically unmarked usage. It is also possible, though, to use a litotes expression like (19b) *without* understatement, but then it must be made clear that this is the intended interpretation.

If this reasoning concerning *much* is correct, then it appears that Norwegian predicative definite NPis are simply normal attenuating NPis, in that they make reference to a positive scalar value but by convention imply the opposite.

#### 4. The definiteness problem

A very surprising property of the Norwegian predicative definite NPI is the definiteness marking. Normally, if a Norwegian definite nominal phrase contains a prenominal modifier, such as an adjective or a quantifier, there is normally both a prenominal and a (suffix) postnominal definiteness mar-

ker (in addition to the definiteness marking on the modifier).<sup>6</sup> This is the well-known “double definiteness”, also found in Swedish and Faroese. An example is given in (20).

- (20) den lang-e tur-en  
*DEF long-DEF trip-DEF*  
 ‘the long trip’

In predicative definite NPIs, by contrast, we find a suffixed definiteness marker, as we have already seen, and the adjective is also definite, but there is no prenominal definiteness marker:

- (21)a. Ho var ikkje stor-e jent-a.  
*she was not big-DEF girl-DEF*  
 ‘She was no big girl.’  
 b. Vi gikk ikkje lang-e tur-en.  
*we walked not long-DEF trip-DEF*  
 ‘We did not walk a long distance.’

The discussion that follows below aims at explaining the morphosyntactic as well as the semantic differences between predicative definite NPIs and nominal phrases that are not sensitive to polarity. Pursuing that goal, I first address the semantics of predicative definite NPIs once more, this time focusing on its referential properties. Then I turn to the syntactic structure of predicative definite NPIs, and finally, I compare the predicative definite NPI to nominal phrases that are similar in certain respects. As we will see, this gives us a better understanding of the sources of the special properties of the predicative definite NPI.

#### *4.1 Definiteness and referential defectiveness in predicative definite NPIs*

As I have already pointed out, the prenominal definiteness marker is obligatorily absent in predicative definite NPIs. Thus, if a prenominal definite determiner is added, we are no longer dealing with a predicative definite NPI at all. As indicated in (22), there is then no need for the negation or any other NPI-licensor, and adjectives representing the lower end of the scale are just as acceptable as adjectives representing the upper end of the scale.

<sup>6</sup> There are however certain exceptions to this generalisation – see e.g. Julien (2005).

- (22)a. Ho var (ikkje) den store/vesle jenta.  
*she was not the big.DEF/little.DEF girl.DEF*  
 ‘She was (not) the big/little girl.’
- b. Vi gikk (ikkje) den lange/korte turen.  
*we walked not the long.DEF/short.DEF trip.DEF*  
 ‘We did (not) walk the long/short distance.’

There are also other semantic differences between the nominal phrases in (21) and those in (22). The nominal phrases in (22) come with existential presuppositions; (22a) presupposes that there is or was a big girl, and (22b) presupposes that a long trip or distance existed or exists. Moreover, in both examples the reading is also specific: there is a particular big girl/long distance that both speaker and hearer have in mind. Thus, these nominal phrases are ordinary definites also semantically (see e.g. Lyons 1999:2–3). Moreover, since they are not NPis they also do not invoke scalar implicatures.

Contrasting with those in (22), the nominal phrases in (21) do not give rise to existential presuppositions. Thus, (21a) does not come with the presupposition that there is any big girl, and (21b) does not mean that any particular long trip is relevant or that a specific long distance exists. In this respect, they behave as NPis normally do (see Strawson 1950 and the discussion in Giannakidou 1998:124–125).

It can also be shown that predicative definite NPis must appear inside the scope of their licenser. Thus, they are unacceptable as subjects (at least as long as the negation does not move along):

- (23)a. \* Store jenta banka ikkje på døra.  
*big.DEF girl.DEF knocked not on door.DEF*  
 Intended meaning: ‘No big girl knocked on the door.’
- b. \* Lange stykket sto ikkje i avisa om dette.  
*long.DEF piece.DEF stood not in paper.DEF about this*  
 Intended meaning: ‘No long piece appeared in the paper about this.’
- c. \* Mange timane gikk ikkje før eg var lei.  
*many hours.DEF passed not before I was tired*  
 Intended meaning: ‘Not many hours passed before I was tired of it.’

As pointed out by Giannakidou (1998, to appear), this behaviour is also typical of NPis: many NPis obligatorily take narrow scope and are referentially deficient in the sense that they cannot have a deictic interpretation; they cannot assert existence or introduce discourse referents in the actual

world. On her account, they contain a variable that requires an operator that supplies existential closure. The effect of referential deficiency is also seen in (24), where the existence of crumbs on the floor is not asserted (but crucially not denied either). This is a consequence of the polarity sensitive phrase *any crumbs* obligatorily taking scope under the negation, which then acts as a licenser.

(24) John did not see any crumbs on the floor.

Since the Norwegian NPIs that I focus on in this paper are referentially deficient, or, in other words, have a predicative interpretation, while at the same time being morphologically definite, I call them *predicative definite NPIs*.

More specifically, it is necessary that the modifier in a Norwegian predicative definite NPI is inside the scope of the licenser. This means that the negation must target the modifier, it cannot target the noun. The noun must be given in the discourse, and it cannot then have a contrastive function. This is shown in (25).

- (25)a. Dei drog ikkje på LANGE tog-turen.  
           they set.out not on long.DEF train-journey.DEF.  
           Den var kort.  
           It was short  
           ‘They didn’t set out on a LONG train journey. It was short.’
- b. # Dei drog ikkje på lange TOG-turen.  
       they set.out not on long.DEF train-journey.DEF  
       Dei kjørte bil.  
       they drove car  
       Intended meaning: ‘They didn’t set out on a long TRAIN journey.  
       They drove a car.’

The contrast between (25a) and (25b) is connected to the polarity sensitivity of the nominal phrase. The attenuating meaning is a consequence of the negation operating on the scalar element (the adjective or quantifier), and if the negation targets the noun instead, the scalar element will be left outside the scope of the negation, with the result that the NPI is not licensed.

In this respect, predicative definite NPIs differ from ordinary nominal phrases, which allow the negation to target any category inside them. For example, in the phrase *ein lang togtur* ‘a long train journey’ in (26) either the adjective or the noun can be the target of negation, as shown:

- (26)a. Dei drog ikkje på noen LANG tog-tur.  
*they set.out not on any long train-journey*  
 Den var kort.  
*it was short*  
 ‘They didn’t set out on a LONG train journey. It was short.’
- b. Dei drog ikkje på noen lang TOG-tur.  
*they set.out not on any long train-journey*  
 Dei kjørte bil.  
*they drove car*  
 ‘They didn’t set out on a long TRAIN journey. They drove a car.’

On the topic of reference, Giannakidou (1998:70) further points out that some elements with dependent reference can, when they appear in an appropriate embedded domain, introduce discourse referents, although not in the actual world. This also hold for certain NPIS in Norwegian, such as *noen som helst* ‘anyone at all’, which in the hypothetical context in (27) introduces a referent that is later picked up by a pronoun.

- (27) Er det noen som helst<sub>i</sub> der, så be dei<sub>i</sub> komma hit.  
*is it anyone at all there so ask them come here*  
 ‘If anyone at all is there, ask them to come here.’

Corresponding examples cannot be constructed with predicative definite NPIS, since, as we will see in the next section, they are not licensed in conditional contexts. However, in (25a) I have already given an example where a predicative definite NPI is associated with a referent that is shared with a following pronoun. But notably, this referent is not *introduced* by the predicative definite NPI. As noted, the referent must have been introduced into the discourse earlier. Moreover, it is only associated with the head noun *togturen* ‘(the) train journey’. The whole phrase *lange togturen* is not a definite description. Hence, here too we can observe the referential deficiency of predicative definite NPIS.

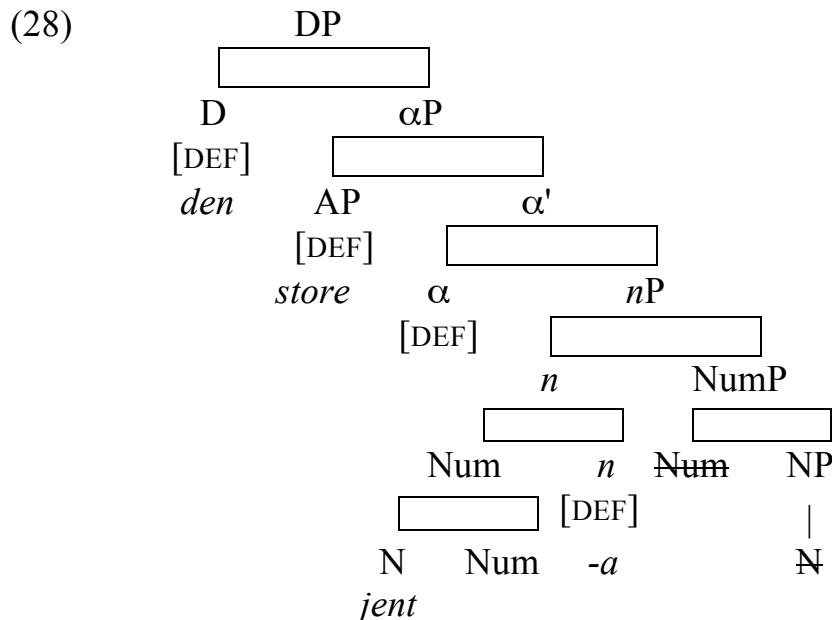
Given that predicative definite NPIS are referential deficient, certain questions arise concerning their definiteness marking. Why is the suffixed definiteness marker obligatory, despite the nonreferential reading? And why is the proposed definiteness marker obligatorily absent?

#### 4.2 The syntactic structure of predicative definite NPIS

In an attempt to find at least a partial answer to the questions that concluded the previous section, let us first consider the syntactic structure of a nominal phrase with a prenominal determiner, a prenominal adjective, and



a head noun with a suffixed definiteness marker, such as for example those shown in (22ab). Following Julien (2005), these phrases have the structure shown in (28). As we see, the prenominal determiner spells out the D head, whereas the suffixed definiteness marker represents a lower functional head, called *n*.<sup>7</sup> The phonological realisation of *n* as a suffix to the noun is the result of the noun having head-moved to *n*. If no adjectives or other modifiers intervene between D and *n*, the suffixed marker also represents D (see Julien 2005 or Roehrs 2009 for the technical details), but when there are adjectives or other modifiers between D and *n*, these two heads are spelled out separately, hence the “double definiteness”. When *n* is definite, all higher heads will also be definite, in agreement with *n*. This is why the definiteness shows up on all elements from *n* upwards, including adjective phrases, which I take to be specifiers of heads located between D and *n*.



Importantly, although D and *n* have the same value for definiteness, they make different contributions to the semantics of the phrase as a whole. This has been observed by several researchers in the field. Johannessen (1997) suggests that the prenominal determiner encodes deixis, whereas Anderssen (2005) and Julien (2005) both take the prenominal determiner to represent uniqueness (or, with a different term, inclusiveness) while the suffixed definiteness marker represents specificity. Then Roehrs (2009), after a thorough investigation of the two types of markers, concludes that “whereas the prenominal determiner brings about deictic, uniqueness, or generic reference, the postnominal one seems to be specific or expletive in

<sup>7</sup> Roehrs (2009) proposes a similar structure but with partly different labels.

interpretation” (Roehrs 2009:46-47). On all accounts, a nominal phrase that contains a prenominal modifier but no prenominal determiner should not be able to refer in the way that definite nominal phrases normally do. This is borne out, with the qualification that what matters is the presence of the D head, and not the presence of the prenominal determiner.

In Norwegian (and in Swedish, where the nominal syntax is very much the same) one can find several types of definite nominal phrases containing prenominal modifiers but without prenominal determiners. In cases where the reference of the DP as a whole equals the set that is picked out by D’s complement; that is, by those elements of the nominal phrase that have descriptive content, the prenominal determiner is optional (see Strohwollin 2003, Julien 2005). This is true of nominal phrases headed by a proper name, as in (29a), and of phrases where a modifier helps pick out a unique referent in the relevant context, as in (29b) and (29c).

- (29)a. (Den) vesle Anna klappa i hendene.  
*the little.DEF Anna clapped in hands.DEF*  
 ‘(The) Little Anna clapped her hands.’
- b. Han heldt gitaren i (den) høgre handa.  
*he held guitar.DEF in the right hand.DEF*  
 ‘He held the guitar in his right hand.’
- c. Dei diskuterte kvensom hadde (den) beste bil.en.  
*they discussed who that had the best.DEF car.DEF*  
 ‘They discussed who had the best car.’

Crucially, a D head is assumed to be present in (29abc). Its semantic contribution of deixis/uniqueness is noticed, but since it is identified by other elements that are present, D itself does not have to be spelled out, which means that the prenominal determiner is optional.

Nominal phrases containing a definite adjective and a definite noun, but with the prenominal determiner obligatory absent, are also found. There are at least the two types exemplified in (30):

- (30)a. Veit du ikkje det, (\*den) store jenta!  
*know you not that, DEF big.DEF girl.DEF*  
 ‘Don’t you know that, you big girl!’
- b. Klokka var 8 og det var (\*den) lyse dagen ute!  
*clock.DEF was 8 and it was the light.DEF day.DEF out*  
 ‘It was 8 o’clock and broad daylight outside.’

The phrase in (30a) is a vocative, while the type in (30b), called *depictive* and discussed in detail in Lundeby (1981), is semantically equivalent to an indefinite phrase. Moreover, as Lundeby points out, the adjective represents a property that is part of the semantic content of the noun. In neither case can the semantic features associated with the D head be noticed, and the phrases are not referential. I take these facts as indications that the D head is missing in the phrases shown in (30).

On this background, I will assume that the D head is also missing in Norwegian predicative definite NPIs, and that this is the reason why there is no prenominal determiner, despite the obligatory presence of a prenominal modifier. The whole nominal phrase is just an  $\alpha P$ , or, in those cases where the prenominal modifier is a quantifier, the phrase as a whole is headed by the quantifier.

Despite the absence of a D head, a predicative definite NPI is however formally definite, in the sense that it has a [+definite] feature, which arguably originates in *n* and spreads to the elements above *n*, so that both the noun itself and the adjective have definite form. Hence, there is a conflict between the presence of the definiteness feature, which suggests full referentiality, and the absence of D, which leads to inability to establish a discourse referent. The only way out is to place the phrase in the scope of an operator, so that it never is required to have independent reference. In other words, it is the built-in conflict in the definiteness properties of the predicative definite NPI that causes its polarity sensitivity.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4.3 Bare nouns and full DP NPIs

The proposal that predicative definite NPIs have no D goes against Johannessen (1997), who assumes that since Norwegian predicative definite NPIs can function as arguments, they necessarily contain D heads. Her reasoning is based on the widely held belief that nominal arguments are necessarily DPs (see e.g. Delsing 1993, Longobardi 1994). However, in Julien (2005, 2006) I argued that nominal arguments can be structurally smaller than DPs. My argumentation was based on the so-called bare nouns found in Norwegian and other Scandinavian varieties. Bare nouns are

<sup>8</sup> An anonymous reviewer suggests that the predicative reading of predicative definite NPIs is due to the definiteness spread, with definiteness marking of the adjective as well as on the noun. A parallel is drawn to Greek, where a similar definiteness spread induces a predicative reading:

(i) to      megalo      to      koritsi  
       the      big        the      girl  
       ‘the girl that is big’

However, in Norwegian definiteness spread is obligatory in all nominal phrases—see e.g. the examples in (22) and (29). Hence, I do not think that the predicative reading that predicative definite NPIs get is a consequence of definiteness spread.

countable singular nouns, possibly in combination with an adjective, that appear without any definiteness or indefiniteness marking at all. Such bare nouns can be predicates or arguments, as the following Norwegian examples illustrate (see Julien 2006:116):

- (31)a. Hege er lærar.                      b. Hege kjøpte (ny) billett.  
       *Hege is teacher*                      *Hege bought new ticket*  
       ‘Hege is a teacher.’                      ‘Hege bought a (new) ticket.’

These Scandinavian bare nouns are not sensitive to polarity. They can just as easily appear in positive as in negative contexts—compare (31) and (32):

- (32)a. Hege er ikkje lærar.                      b. Hege kjøpte ikkje (ny) billett.  
       *Hege is not teacher*                      *Hege bought not new ticket*  
       ‘Hege is not a teacher.’                      ‘Hege did not buy a (new) ticket.’

So we see that despite the absence of a D layer in both types, bare nouns are less restricted in their distribution than predicative definite NPis. The reason for this is that unlike predicative definite NPis, bare nouns are not dependent on an operator for their ability to refer. Although they can never have individual reference or establish discourse referents, bare nouns refer to types (see Borthen 2003), a property that Julien (2005, 2006) attributes to the absence of a D head. Hence, bare nouns can appear in any structural position, as long as the pragmatic conditions that determine their use are met. Also note that bare nouns have no definiteness marking and get a strictly indefinite reading, so that the conflict between the definiteness feature and the absence of D that causes predicative definite NPis to be NPis is of no relevance for bare nouns.

On the other hand, there exists definite NPis whose form does not differ from what we see in ordinary nominal phrases. An English example is given in (33) and a Norwegian one in (34):

- (33) I haven't the slightest idea.

- (34) Vi såg på kvarandre og skjønnte ikkje bæra.  
       *we looked at each.other and understood not berry.DEF*  
       ‘We looked at each other, not understanding a thing.’

*The slightest idea* in (33) and *bæra* ‘the berry’ in (34) are formed like ordinary definite nominal phrases. Now if definiteness is the combination of specificity and uniqueness (see e.g. Enç 1991, Abbott 1999), we might

expect them to have a unique and specific reference. However, when they are embedded under an operator, as in these cases, their potential to refer is irrelevant. Hence, it is possible for ordinary definite nominal phrases to appear as NPIs, although they, unlike predicative definite NPIs, also are fully acceptable outside of NPI-licensing contexts.

The two NPIs in (33)–(34) are minimisers, both representing a low scalar value. But ordinary-looking definite nominal phrases can also be attenuating NPIs. Consider the examples in (35), where definite nominal phrases of the normal form, with a preposed as well as a suffixed determiner, and containing scalar adjectives representing a positive value, appear under negation:

- (35)a. *Spele-messig var det ikkje den store finalen.*  
*play-wise was it not the big.DEF final.DEF*  
 ‘Play-wise it was not a great final.’
- b. *Filmen gjorde ikkje det (heilt) store inntrykket*  
*film.DEF made not the totally big.DEF impression.DEF*  
*på meg.*  
*on me*  
 ‘The film did not (totally) impress me.’

The default interpretation of (35a) is that the playing in the final was rather bad, and (35b) will normally be taken to mean that the film did not make much impression at all. As we have seen, in section 3, this is in accordance with the understatement interpretation that attenuating positive value NPIs typically get.

It seems that attenuating NPIs in the form of full DPs most typically involve the adjective *stor* ‘big’ in Norwegian. In addition, the noun cannot be freely chosen either. For example, as I showed in (22), predicative definite NPIs cannot, at least not always, be turned into full DP NPIs. Hence, full DP NPIs are lexically even more restricted than predicative definite NPIs. But note that full DP NPIs can be formally identical to phrases that are not polarity items. For example, the phrase *den store finalen* ‘the big final’ in (35a) can (of course) also have ordinary referential properties, as in (36a). In the case of (35b), it appears that if the emphasiser *heilt* ‘totally’ is included, what we have is an NPI—a Google search returned only NPI uses.<sup>9</sup> But *heilt* is left out, we have a phrase that is not necessarily an NPI. (36b) illustrates the latter point.

<sup>9</sup> I searched for “det heilt store inntrykket” (Nynorsk spelling) and “det helt store inntrykket” (Bokmål spelling).

- (36)a. Bandet er klart for den store finalen.  
*band.DEF is ready for the big.DEF final.DEF*  
 ‘The band is ready for the big final.’
- b. Dei ser det store inntrykket turen har gjort.  
*they see the big.DEF impression.DEF trip.DEF has made*  
 ‘They can see the big impression that the trip has made.’

Predicative definite NPIS, by contrast, do not have formally identical counterparts that are insensitive to polarity. We can therefore conclude that it is the combination of a definiteness feature and absence of D that is the source of the obligatory polarity sensitivity of predicative definite NPIS.

### 4.3 Summary

This section has shown that unlike ordinary definite nominal phrases, Norwegian predicative definite NPIS do not invoke existential presuppositions, and they are not able to introduce discourse referents. Moreover, a predicative definite NPI, or more precisely the modifier that it contains, takes narrow scope with respect to the licenser. On my analysis, predicative definite NPIS have no D head, and the conflict between the presence of the definiteness feature and the absence of D forces the phrase to appear in the scope of an operator—in other words, to be an NPI. This conclusion is corroborated by the fact that bare nouns, having no definiteness at all, as well as nominal phrases with a full set of definiteness markers, do not have the obligatory polarity sensitivity that predicative definite NPIS display.

## 5. Distribution within the clause

So far, we have focused on the semantics and the internal syntax of predicative definite NPIS. We have also briefly touched upon their external syntax. In the following, their external syntax will be examined in more detail. I will approach the issue from two directions: in this section, I deal with the question of which positions a predicative definite NPI may occupy in a clause. To avoid playing with too many variables at a time I use the negation as licenser in most of the examples. Then in the next section I focus on the contexts that license predicative definite NPIS, other than negated clauses.

I have already presented examples where predicative definite NPIS have the syntactic function of a predicate, an object, or a part of an adverbial, and in (37) I give one more example of each type:

- (37)a. Mat var ikkje store problemet der.  
*food was not big.DEF problem.DEF there*  
 ‘Food was not a big problem there.’
- b. Den norske krona har ikkje lange historia.  
*the Norwegian.DEF crown.DEF has not long history.DEF*  
 ‘The Norwegian crown has no long history.’
- c. Eg handla ikkje for store summen.  
*I shopped not for big.DEF sum.DEF*  
 ‘I didn’t shop for a great sum.’

Furthermore, I have already shown, in (23), that predicative definite NPIs cannot appear outside the scope of their licenser.<sup>10</sup> I will now give more support for this generalisation. Firstly, predicative definite NPIs with quantifiers can appear as subjects in initial position if the negation moves along, so that we have constituent negation instead of clausal negation. For some reason, it appears that this does not work if the scalar element is an adjective:

- (38)a. \* Ikkje store jenta banka på døra.  
*not big.DEF girl.DEF knocked on door.DEF*  
 Intended meaning: ‘No big girl knocked on the door.’
- b. \* Ikkje lange stykket sto i avisa om dette.  
*not long.DEF piece.DEF stood in paper.DEF about this*  
 Intended meaning: ‘No long piece appeared in the paper about this.’
- c. Ikkje mange timane gikk før eg var lei.  
*not many hours.DEF passed before I was tired*  
 ‘Not many hours passed before I was tired of it.’

<sup>10</sup> In addition, there is the requirement that any intervening non-licensing operator is not allowed. Thus, examples parallel to those discussed by Linebarger (1980:31) can be constructed:

- (i) Dei prata ikkje mye fordi dei var nervøse.  
*they talked not much because they were nervous*  
 ‘They didn’t talk much because they were nervous.’
- (ii) Dei sa ikkje mange orda fordi dei var nervøse.  
*they said not many words.DEF because they were nervous*  
 ‘They didn’t say many words, because they were nervous.’

The (i) example is ambiguous, since the *because*-clause can be inside or outside the scope of the negation. In (ii), by contrast, there is no ambiguity — the *because*-clause can only be outside the scope of the negation. Following Linebarger, if it were inside the scope of the negation, it would be an intervening operator breaking up the relation between the negation and the NPI.

If we try instead to have predicative definite NPis as subjects but not in initial position, there are still problems. Note first that normally, Norwegian subjects that are not in initial position can precede or follow the negation, as demonstrated in (39).

- (39)a. Da banka den store jenta ikkje på døra.  
*then knocked the big.DEF girl.DEF not on door.DEF*  
 ‘Then the big girl did not knock on the door.’
- b. Da banka ikkje den store jenta på døra.  
*then knocked not the big.DEF girl.DEF on door.DEF*  
 ‘Then the big girl did not knock on the door.’

But as shown in (40), predicative definite NPis cannot precede the negation:<sup>11</sup>

- (40)a. \* Da banka store jenta ikkje på døra.  
*then knocked big.DEF girl.DEF not on door.DEF*  
 Intended meaning: ‘Then no big girl knocked on the door.’
- b. \* Da sto lange stykket ikkje i avisa  
*then stood long.DEF piece.DEF not in paper.DEF*  
 om dette.  
*about this*  
 Intended meaning: ‘Then no long piece appeared in the paper about this.’
- c. \* Da gikk mange timane ikkje før eg var lei.  
*then passed many hours.DEF not before I was tired*  
 Intended meaning: ‘Then not many hours passed before I was tired of it.’

The examples in (41) show that when they instead follow the negation, some predicative definite NPis get a more positive judgement, whereas others are no better in this position than in the position preceding the negation:

<sup>11</sup> Benmamoun (1997) argues that in Moroccan Arabic, NPis are licensed in subject position if they are in a Spec-head relation with (a head that contains) the negation. Either this does not work in Norwegian or else the subjects in (40) are not in the Spec of an appropriate head. If the subject sits in Spec-TP, the negation sits in the Spec of the Neg head, and there is no movement of the Neg head to T, the facts are explained (see e.g. Jensen 2001, Zeijlstra 2005).



- (41)a. \* Da banka ikkje store jenta på døra.  
*then knocked not big.DEF girl.DEF on door.DEF*  
 Intended meaning: ‘Then no big girl knocked on the door.’
- b. ? Da sto ikkje lange stykket i avisa  
*then stood not long.DEF piece.DEF in paper.DEF*  
 om dette.  
*about this*  
 ‘Then no long piece appeared in the paper about this.’
- c. ? Da gikk ikkje mange timane før eg var lei.  
*then passed not many hours.DEF before I was tired*  
 ‘Then not many hours passed before I was tired of it.’

In other words, even when the requirement that they should be inside the scope of their licenser is met, predicative definite NPIs are not always good as subjects. I think the relevant difference is between (41a) on the one hand and (41bc) on the other is that whereas the verb in (41a) is agentive, and its subject an external argument, the verbs in (41b) and (41c) are unaccusative, and consequently, the “subjects” can be taken to be internal arguments and here occupying the object position, perhaps with a phonologically empty expletive filling the surface subject position.<sup>12</sup> This is consistent with what we have already seen concerning the semantics of predicative definite NPIs: if they obligatorily have narrow scope, and do not allow a kind reading, then there is no possibility of being a subject.

The same effect is found when predicative definite NPIs appear as associates of an expletive subject in presentational constructions. These associates obligatorily follow the negation:

- (42)a. \* Det banka ikkje store jenta på døra.  
*it knocked not big.DEF girl.DEF on door.DEF*  
 Intended meaning: ‘There was no big girl knocking on the door.’
- b. Det sto ikkje lange stykket i avisa om dette.  
*it stood not long.DEF piece.DEF in paper.DEF about this*  
 ‘There was no long piece in the paper about this.’
- c. Det gikk ikkje mange timane før eg var lei.  
*it passed not many hours.DEF before I was tired*  
 ‘Not many hours passed before I was tired of it.’

<sup>12</sup> Thanks to Helge Lødrup for pointing out this.

Only semantically indefinite nominal phrases can appear in this position (see e.g. Delsing 1993:128–129), so the grammaticality of (42b) and (42c) is a clear indication that predicative definite NPis are not semantically definite, despite their definite morphology.

Finally, when predicative definite NPis appear in the focus position of a cleft construction, the result is always fully grammatical, even in cases where the focused constituent corresponds to the subject of the non-cleft counterpart of the construction:

- (43)a. Det var ikkje store jenta som banka på døra.  
*it was not big.DEF girl.DEF that knocked on door.DEF*  
 ‘It was no big girl that knocked on the door.’
- b. Det var ikkje lange stykket som sto i avisa.  
*it was not long.DEF piece.DEF that stood in paper.DEF*  
 ‘It was no long piece that appeared in the paper.’
- c. Det var ikkje mangetimane som gikk før eg var lei  
*it was not many hours.DEF that passed before I was tired*  
 ‘It was not many hours that passed before I was tired of it.’

The reason for this is probably that the predicative definite NPis in (43) are formally predicates and not subjects, since they follow the copula.

On the topic of NPis in subject positions, van der Wouden (1997:165–166) points out that NPis can be subjects in English and Dutch if a licenser is topicalised or located in a higher clause. This also holds for the Norwegian NPI *noen som helst* ‘anyone at all’, which is shown with a topicalised licenser in (44a) and licensed from a higher clause in (44b):

- (44)a. Aldri har noen som helst brydd seg om dette.  
*never has anyone at all cared REFL about this*  
 ‘Never has anyone at all cared about this.’
- b. Dei tvilte på at noen som helst hadde vori der.  
*they doubted on that anyone at all had been there*  
 ‘They doubted that anyone at all had been there.’

But predicative definite NPis cannot be licensed in this way. As we will see in the next section, both *aldri* ‘never’ and *tvile på* ‘doubt’ can license predicative definite NPis in other cases, so the ungrammaticality of (45ab) and (46ab) is not due to the licensors:

- (45)a. \*Aldri har store jenta banka på døra.  
*never has big.DEF girl.DEF knocked on door.DEF*  
 ‘Never has any big girl knocked on the door.’
- b. \*Aldri har lange stykket stått i avisa om dette.  
*never has long.DEF piece.DEF stood in paper.DEF about this*  
 ‘Never has any long piece appeared in the paper about this.’
- (46)a. \*Dei tvilte på at store jenta banka på døra.  
*they doubted on that big.DEF girl.DEF knocked on door.DEF*  
 ‘They doubted that any big girl knocked on the door.’
- b. \*Dei tvilte på at lange stykket sto i avisa om dette.  
*they doubted on that long.DEF piece.DEF stood in paper.DEF about this*  
 ‘They doubted that any long piece appeared in the paper about this.’

Instead, I think that the explanation lies in the referential deficiency of predicative definite NPIs, which prevents them from being subjects, also when they are embedded under appropriate operators.

For comparison, I show in (47) how the NPI *noen som helst* ‘anybody at all’ behaves in the positions where predicative definite NPIs were tested:

- (47)a. \*Noen som helst banka ikkje på døra.  
*anyone at all knocked not on door.DEF*
- b. Ikkje noen som helst banka på døra.  
*not anyone at all knocked on door.DEF*  
 ‘Nobody at all knocked on the door.’
- c. \*I går banka noen som helst ikkje på døra.  
*yesterday knocked anyone at all not on door.DEF*
- d. I går banka ikkje noen som helst på døra.  
*yesterday knocked not anyone at all on door.DEF*  
 ‘Yesterday nobody at all knocked on the door.’
- e. Det banka ikkje noen som helst på døra.  
*it knocked not anyone at all on door.DEF*  
 ‘Nobody at all knocked on the door.’

- f. Det var ikkje noen som helst som banka på  
*it was not anybody at all that knocked on*  
 døra.  
*door.DEF*  
 ‘It wasn’t anybody at all who knocked on the door.’

We see here that the NPI *noen som helst* can be clause-initial only if the negation comes along, and it has to follow the negation also when it appears in other positions. In this respect, it shows the same behaviour as predicative definite NPis. The difference is that as long as it appears in the scope of its licenser, *noen som helst* can be the subject of an agentive verb, such as *banka* ‘knock’—see (47d) and (47e).<sup>13</sup> As we have seen, this is not possible for predicative definite NPis.

Interestingly, the same restriction holds for bare nouns. Borthen (2003:78) notes that although bare nouns can appear as subjects of non-agentive verbs, as in (48a) and (48b), as subjects of passives, as in (48c), and also in agent adverbials, as in (48d), having a bare noun as the subject of an agentive verb, as in (48e), consistently leads to ungrammaticality.

- (48)a. Søppel-dunk manglar.  
*garbage-can lacks*  
 ‘There is no garbage can.’
- b. Sjukebil er på veg.  
*ambulance is on way*  
 ‘An ambulance is on its way.’
- c. Ny billett er bestilt.  
*new ticket is ordered*  
 ‘A new ticket has been ordered.’
- d. Per vart biten av hoggorm.  
*Per became bitten by snake*  
 ‘Per was bitten by a snake.’
- e. \* Hoggorm beit Per.  
*snake bit Per*  
 Intended meaning: ‘A snake bit Per.’

<sup>13</sup> The grammaticality of (47e) shows that the presentational construction is not a reliable test for unaccusativity in Scandinavian, since it allows agentive monovalent verbs (see e.g. Faarlund et al. 1997:830–832).

Hence, the generalisation is that because of their referential defectiveness, nominal phrases with no D-projection cannot be subjects of agentive verbs, although they can appear in other argument positions.

It should also be noted that predicative definite NPIs which are not subjects can undergo focus movement to clause-initial position. That is, they can move past their licenser by A-bar-movement but not by A-movement:

- (49)a. Store jenta var ho ikkje.  
*big.DEF girl.DEF was she not*  
 ‘A big girl, she was not.’
- b. Lange turen gikk vi ikkje.  
*long.DEF trip.DEF walked we not*  
 ‘A long distance, we did not walk.’
- c. Store summen handla eg ikkje for.  
*big.DEF sum.DEF shopped I not for*  
 ‘A great sum, I didn’t shop for.’

There exist other Norwegian NPIs that can be topicalised, such as the adverb *ennå* ‘yet’, shown in (50) (see Lindstad 1999:11), but NPIs that resist topicalisation are also found, for example *noen som helst* ‘anyone at all’, as shown in (51):

- (50)a. Dei er ikkje heime ennå.  
*they are not at.home yet*  
 ‘They are not at home yet.’
- b. Ennå er dei ikkje heime.  
*yet are they not at.home*
- (51)a. Dei såg ikkje noen som helst.  
*they saw not anyone at all*  
 ‘They did not see anyone at all.’
- b. \* Noen som helst såg dei ikkje.  
*anyone at all saw they not*

We can conclude that predicative definite NPIs are more flexible than certain other NPIs in this respect, but they are not unique in their ability to be topicalised.

## 6. Licensing contexts

It is well known that some NPIS put more specific requirements on their licensing conditions than others. This has been discussed by many researchers working on polarity elements. In the following, I will first present some facts concerning the licensing of predicative definite NPIS, and then I will confront these facts with the theories of Progovac (1994), van der Wouden (1997), and Giannakidou (1998). These three approaches are chosen because they have been very influential since their introduction, which is not to say that there has not been any development in NPI theory in later years. My aim is, firstly, to shed more light on the predicative definite NPIS themselves, and, secondly, to evaluate the three approaches.

As my test cases I will use three predicative definite NPIS with different syntactic functions: the predicate in (52a), the object of an agentive verb in (52b), and the object of a stative verb in (52c).

- (52)a. Ho var ikkje store jenta.  
*she was not big.DEF girl.DEF*  
 ‘She was no big girl.’
- b. Vi gikk ikkje lange turen.  
*we walked not long.DEF trip.DEF*  
 ‘We walked no long distance.’
- c. Dei hadde ikkje store sjansane.  
*they had not big.DEF/PL chances.DEF*  
 ‘They had no big chances.’

These constructions will be compared to three other Norwegian NPIS, all minimisers: the idiomatic *løfte ein finger* ‘lift a finger’, with an indefinite noun, and *skjønne bæra* (literally ‘understand the berry’) ‘understand a thing’, with a definite noun, and with *noe som helst* ‘anything at all’.

### 6.1 *Licensors of predicative definite NPIS*

Since all the NPIS obviously are licensed by sentential negation, I will start by showing that the negative nominal phrase *ingen av dei* ‘none of them’ in subject position also licenses all the NPIS under investigation:

- (53)a. Ingen av dei sa noe som helst.  
*none of them said anything at all*  
 ‘None of them said anything at all.’

- b. Ingen av dei løfta ein finger.  
*none of them lifted a finger*  
 ‘None of them lifted a finger.’
- c. Ingen av dei skjønnte bæra.  
*none of them understood berry.DEF*  
 ‘None of them understood a thing.’
- d. ? Ingen av dei var store jenta.  
*none of them was big.DEF girl.DEF*  
 ‘None of them was a big girl.’
- e. ? Ingen av dei gikk lange turen.  
*none of them walked long.DEF trip.DEF*  
 ‘None of them walked a long distance.’
- f. Ingen av dei hadde store sjansane.  
*none of them had big.DEF/PL chances.DEF*  
 ‘None of them had any big chances.’

Concerning the question marks in (53d) and (53e), I think they simply mean that the constructions need more context in order to be immediately accepted by the speakers. As Janne Bondi Johannessen points out to me, (53e) gets perfect if there is for example a continuation like ‘...since they had to get home for dinner’. I feel confident that (53d) would also improve in the right context.

More generally, when speakers of Norwegian are confronted with a less frequent combination of a licenser and a predicative definite NPI, they tend to react slightly negatively. However, this reaction does not necessarily mean that the combination is in any way ungrammatical. Rather, the reason for the reaction is probably that since predicative definite NPIs are so often seen in the context of negation, it takes some time getting used to seeing them in other contexts. But importantly, I think that they have the potential of appearing in more different contexts than what we normally see. For example, searching for the string <negation + adjective + definite noun> in the Oslo corpus returns over 100 relevant examples, but if the negation is replaced by *aldri* ‘never’, there are no hits at all. A Google search for <aldri mange timane> ‘never many hours.DEF’ gave 1 hit, as compared to 4420 hits for <ikkje mange timane> ‘not many hours.DEF’. This indicates that although predicative definite NPIs are very rarely licensed by *aldri*, the combination is possible—as demonstrated in the following examples:

- (54)a. Ho sa aldri noe som helst.  
*she said never anything at all*  
 ‘She never said anything at all.’
- b. Ho løfta aldri ein finger.  
*she lifted never a finger*  
 ‘She never lifted a finger.’
- c. Ho skjønnte aldri bæra.  
*she understood never berry.DEF*  
 ‘She never understood a thing.’
- d. ? Ho var aldri store jenta.  
*she was never big.DEF girl.DEF*  
 ‘She was never a big girl.’
- e. Vi gikk aldri lange turen.  
*we walked never long.DEF trip.DEF*  
 ‘We never walked a long distance.’
- f. Dei hadde aldri store sjansane.  
*they had never big.DEF/PL chances.DEF*  
 ‘They never had any big chances.’

We also see, though, that (54d) is slightly degraded. I think this is due to pragmatics, since the use of *aldri* might seem to imply that her being a big girl fluctuates over time. If the copula *var* ‘was’ is instead replaced by *vart* ‘became’, the construction gets perfectly fine:

- (55) Ho vart aldri store jenta.  
*she became never big.DEF girl.DEF*  
 ‘She never grew to be a big girl.’

I will therefore conclude that predicative definite NPis in general can be licensed by *aldri* ‘never’.

The nominal phrase *nesten ingen* ‘almost nobody’, shown in (56), can license the three minimisers, but it is less good with predicative definite NPis, although there is some variation between speakers:

- (56)a. Nesten ingen sa noe som helst.  
*almost nobody said anything at all*  
 ‘Almost nobody said anything at all.’



- b. Nesten ingen løfta ein finger.  
*almost nobody lifted a finger*  
 ‘Almost nobody lifted a finger.’
- c. Nesten ingen skjønnte bæra.  
*almost nobody understood berry.DEF*  
 ‘Almost nobody understood a thing.’
- d. ?\*Nesten ingen var store jenta.  
*almost nobody was big.DEF girl.DEF*  
 Intended meaning: ‘Almost nobody was a big girl.’
- e. ?\*Nesten ingen gikk lange turen.  
*almost nobody walked long.DEF trip.DEF*  
 Intended meaning: ‘Almost nobody walked a long distance.’
- f. ?\*Nesten ingen hadde store sjansane.  
*almost nobody had big.DEF/PL chances.DEF*  
 Intended meaning: ‘Almost nobody had any big chances.’

As demonstrated in (57), we get the same result with the nominal phrase *få av dei* ‘few of them’ as a licenser. Note that this licenser does not contain formal negation.

- (57)a. Få av dei sa noe som helst.  
*few of them said anything at all*  
 ‘Few of them said anything at all.’
- b. Få av dei løfta ein finger.  
*few of them lifted a finger*  
 ‘Few of them lifted a finger.’
- c. Få av dei skjønnte bæra.  
*few of them understood berry.DEF*  
 ‘Few of them understood a thing.’
- d. \* Få av dei var store jenta.  
*few of them was big.DEF girl.DEF*  
 ‘Few of them was a big girl.’
- e. \* Få av dei gikk lange turen.  
*few of them walked long.DEF trip.DEF*  
 ‘Few of them walked a long distance.’
- f. \* Få av dei hadde store sjansane.  
*none of them had big.DEF/PL chances.DEF*  
 ‘Few of them had any big chances.’

If we now go back to (46), we saw there that *tvile på* ‘doubt’ cannot license a predicative definite NPI in the subject position of its complement clause. However, the following set of examples shows that *tvile på* is after all a possible licenser for all the NPis in our test set, and that it can license even predicative definite NPis across a clause boundary, as long as the predicative definite NPis are not in subject position:

- (58)a. Eg tvilar på at ho sa noe som helst.  
*I doubt on that she said anything at all*  
 ‘I doubt that she said anything at all.’
- b. Eg tvilar på at ho løfta ein finger.  
*I doubt on that she lifted a finger*  
 ‘I doubt that she lifted a finger.’
- c. Eg tvilar på at ho skjønnte bæra.  
*I doubt on that she understood berry.DEF*  
 ‘I doubt that she understood a thing.’
- d. Eg tvilar på at ho var store jenta.  
*I doubt on that she was big.DEF girl.DEF*  
 ‘I doubt that she was a big girl.’
- e. Eg tvilar på at dei gikk lange turen.  
*I doubt on that they walked long.DEF trip.DEF*  
 ‘I doubt that they walked a long distance.’
- f. Eg tvilar på at dei hadde store sjansane.  
*I doubt on that they had big.DEF/PL chances.DEF*  
 ‘I doubt that they had any big chances.’

Furthermore, all the NPis in our test set are licensed in polarity questions, as we see in (59):

- (59)a. Sa ho noe som helst?  
*said she anything at all*  
 ‘Did she say anything at all?’
- b. Løfta ho (nokong) ein finger?  
*lifted she any time a finger*  
 ‘Did she (ever) lift a finger?’ [negative answer expected]
- c. Skjønnte ho bæra?  
*understood she berry.DEF*  
 ‘Did she understand a thing?’ [negative answer expected]

- d. Var ho store jenta?  
*was she big.DEF girl.DEF*  
 ‘Was she a big girl?’ [negative answer expected]
- e. Gikk dei lange turen?  
*walked they long.DEF trip.DEF*  
 ‘Did they walk a long distance?’ [negative answer expected]
- f. Hadde dei store sjansane?  
*had they big.DEF/PL chances.DEF*  
 ‘Had they any big chances?’ [negative answer expected]

One can note, though, that polarity questions involving idiomatic minimisers or predicative definite NPIs have what is sometimes called a negative rhetorical effect. As Guerzoni (2004) points out, a more accurate term is *negative bias*. The questions signal that a negative answer is expected, and because of this, they can be answered negatively with a plain ‘no’, but an affirmative answer will have to explicitly counter the expectation and thus contain more than just ‘yes’. Guerzoni suggests that this effect is typical of minimisers, but since predicative definite NPIs are not minimisers, it appears instead that the effect is connected to NPIs in general.

The last NPI-licensing context to be tested here is conditional clauses. Conditionals are known to license NPIs in their antecedents, and as we see below, *noe som helst* and *løfte ein finger* can be licensed in this way. For *skjønne bæra* and predicative definite NPIs, on the other hand, conditionals are not licensors.

- (60)a. Viss ho seier noe som helst, så bør du høre etter.  
*if she says anything at all so ought you listen*  
 ‘If she says anything at all, you should listen.’
- b. Viss ho løftar ein finger, så er det av tvang.  
*if she lifts a finger so is it of force*  
 ‘If she lifts a finger it is through force.’
- c. ?\* Viss ho skjønner bæra, så blir læraren glad.  
*if she understands berry.DEF so becomes teacher.DEF happy*  
 Intended meaning: ‘If she understands a thing the teacher gets happy.’
- d. \* Viss ho er store jenta, så kan ho bli med.  
*if she is big.DEF girl.DEF so can she become with*  
 Intended meaning: ‘If she is a big girl she can come along.’

- e. \* Viss dei gikk lange turen, så vart dei sikkert  
 if theywalked long.DEF trip.DEF so became they surely  
 slitne.  
 tired  
 Intended meaning: ‘If they walked a long distance they surely got tired.’
- f. \* Viss dei har store sjansane, så får vi veta det.  
 if they have big.DEF/PL chances.DEF so get we know it  
 Intended meaning: ‘If they have any big chances we will get to know it.’

Now for the sake of the overview, our whole test battery is summarised in table 2 (where NB stands for *negative bias*):

	<i>ingen av dei</i>	<i>aldri</i>	<i>nesten ingen</i>	<i>få av dei</i>	<i>tvile på</i>	polarity question	conditiona l clause
<i>noe som helst</i>	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK
<i>løfte ein finger</i>	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK	NB	OK
<i>skjønne bære</i>	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK	NB	?*
<i>var store jenta</i>	?	OK	?*	*	OK	NB	*
<i>gikk lange turen</i>	?	OK	?*	*	OK	NB	*
<i>hadde store sjansane</i>	OK	OK	?*	*	OK	NB	*

Table 2: Summary of NPI licensing

We see here that there is considerable variation both within the set of licensors and within the set of NPIs. We don’t find two licensors that have exactly the same effect, neither are there two NPIs that behave exactly the same. But I have already suggested, some of the variation is due to pragmatics. If we ignore the pragmatic problems and look at our data from a purely syntactic point of view, we have one class of licensors, represented here by *ingen av dei* ‘none of them’, *aldri* ‘never’, and *tvile på* ‘doubt’, which license all the NPIs under discussion; another class, consisting of *nesten ingen* ‘almost nobody’ and *få av dei* ‘few of them’, which license the minimisers but not predicative definite NPIs, and a third class, consisting of polarity questions and conditional clauses, which do not tolerate predicative definite NPIs, at least not without complications, and show variable behaviour with idiomatic NPIs. The question is now how these facts can be handled by the three theories of polarity mentioned above.

## 6.2 Progovac (1994)

In the theory of Progovac (1994), the syntactic behaviour of NPIs is explained on the basis of Binding Theory. That is, she proposes that NPIs are subject to binding principles, although there is some variation between different NPIs and between different languages when it comes to the details. Some NPIs are subject to Principle A of the Binding Theory, i.e. they behave like anaphors and need a clausemate binder, whereas other NPIs are subject to Principle B of the Binding Theory, i.e. they behave like pronouns and will not accept a clausemate binder, although they need a binder within their binding domain (Progovac 1994:56). In either case, the binder is either a visibly negative element, or, in NPI licensing contexts like questions and conditionals, where there is no negative element, the binder is an empty polarity operator sitting in the C-projection (Progovac 1994:62). For adversative predicates like *doubt* Progovac proposes that they select clausal complements with a polarity operator in C (Progovac 1994:67). In addition, she assumes that some polarity items are able to move at LF, so that what seems to be a long-distance binding relation is in fact a local one, with the polarity item raised into the vicinity of the licenser (Progovac 1994:56).

Concerning idiomatic NPIs, Progovac (1994:102–103) proposes that they are listed in the lexicon as negative. That is, the negation is part of the lexical item itself, and because of this, idiomatic NPIs necessarily appear with a clausemate negation. It also follows that in polarity questions containing idiomatic NPIs, the polarity operator in the C-domain must have a negative value, and consequently, these questions get what she calls a negative rhetorical reading, which, as already noted, is another term for the negative bias discussed by Guerzoni (2004).

In our test set there are two idiomatic NPIs: *løfte ein finger* ‘lift a finger’ and *skjønne bæra* ‘understand the berry/a thing’. The ability of these NPIs to be licensed by the clausemate licensors *ingen av dei* ‘none of them’, *aldri* ‘never’, *nesten ingen* ‘almost nobody’, and *få av dei* ‘few of them’ is in line with Progovac’s proposal, and so is the possibility of licensing by the adversative predicate *tvile på* ‘doubt’ in a higher clause and the biased reading they force on polarity questions. But the fact that the two idiomatic NPIs do not get the same judgements in conditional clauses is unexpected on Progovac’s analysis.

*Noe som helst* ‘anything at all’ is easier to account for within Progovac’s model. This polarity item is apparently of the anaphoric type and can be licensed by visible or invisible clausemate binders.

It is however hard to see how predicative definite NPIs could fit into Progovac’s system. Since they are licensed by the clausemate licensors *ingen av dei* ‘none of them’ and *aldri* ‘never’, we must conclude that they

are NPIS of the anaphoric type, obeying principle A of the binding theory. But we cannot then explain why they are not licensed by clausemate *nesten ingen* ‘almost nobody’ and *få av dei* ‘few of them’. Moreover, following Progovac’s model we would have to say that predicative definite NPIS are licensed by the operator that sits in the C of clausal complements to *tvile på* ‘doubt’, but then one must wonder why they are *not* licensed by the operator that Progovac assumes to be present in the C-domain of conditional clauses. It is also unclear why we get a negative bias when predicative definite NPIS appear in polarity questions, since predicative definite NPIS are not idioms. If we say that predicative definite NPIS nevertheless come with a negative feature from the lexicon, then the question is if there are any NPIS at all that are not listed as negative. On the whole, Progovac’s model does not seem to be fine-grained enough to capture all the variation found among polarity sensitive elements.

### 6.3 Van der Wouden (1997)

Let us now see how the NPIS in our test set would be analysed in the approach of van der Wouden (1997), which builds on works like Ladusaw (1979) and Zwarts (1998). According to van der Wouden, NPIS of the weakest type only require a licenser that is monotone decreasing, whereas medium strong NPIS need a licenser that is also anti-additive (van der Wouden 1997:130). *Monotone decreasing* is defined as in (61) (cf. van der Wouden 1997:95), and *anti-additive* is defined as in (62) (cf. van der Wouden 1997:99):

#### (61) DEFINITION OF MONOTONE DECREASING

Let  $B$  and  $B^*$  be two Boolean algebras. A function  $f$  from  $B$  to  $B^*$  is monotone decreasing iff for arbitrary elements  $X, Y \in B$ :  $X \subseteq Y \Rightarrow f(Y) \subseteq f(X)$

#### (62) DEFINITION OF ANTI-ADDITIVE

Let  $B$  and  $B^*$  be two Boolean algebras. A function  $f$  from  $B$  to  $B^*$  is anti-additive iff for arbitrary elements  $X, Y \in B$ :  $f(X \cup Y) = f(X) \cap f(Y)$

In van der Wouden’s terms, a monotone decreasing expression constitutes *minimal negation*, whereas anti-additive expressions are referred to as *regular negation* (van der Wouden 1997:130).

The following examples will serve to demonstrate that the Norwegian nominal phrase *nesten ingen* ‘almost nobody’ is monotone decreasing, since (63a) entails (63b), as indicated:

(63)a. Nesten ingen     åt     fisk.  
          *almost nobody ate fish*  
          ‘Almost nobody ate fish.’

⇒ b. Nesten ingen     åt     kveite.  
          *almost nobody ate halibut*  
          ‘Almost nobody ate halibut.’

The phrase is however not anti-additive, as (64a) is not equivalent to (64b) (see van der Wouden (1997:109)):

(64)a. Nesten ingen     sang eller dansa.  
          *almost nobody sang or danced*  
          ‘Almost nobody sang or danced.’

⇔;b. Nesten ingen     sang og    nesten ingen     dansa.  
          *almost nobody sang and almost nobody danced*  
          ‘Almost nobody sang and almost nobody danced.’

Since we have seen that predicative definite NPIs are not licensed by *nesten ingen*, we can conclude that predicative definite NPIs are not weak NPIs, according to van der Wouden’s classification. The three NPIs *noe som helst* ‘anything at all’, *løfte ein finger* ‘lift a finger’ and *skjønne bæra* ‘understand a thing’, by contrast, all belong to this class, since they are licensed by minimal negation.

By contrast, we saw in (53) that the nominal phrase *ingen av dei* ‘none of them’ licenses all the NPIs in our test battery. And as demonstrated in (65), *ingen av dei* is anti-additive:

(65)a. Ingen av    dei     sang eller dansa.  
          *none of them sang or danced*  
          ‘None of them sang or danced.’

⇔ b. Ingen av    dei     sang og    ingen av    dei    dansa.  
          *none of them sang and none of them danced*  
          ‘None of them sang and none of them danced.’

Since *ingen av dei* is a regular negation, it is of course expected that this phrase should license the weak NPIs, which only require minimal negation for their licensing.<sup>14</sup> The interesting point is that *ingen av dei* also licenses

<sup>14</sup> I do not include an example to show that *ingen av dei* ‘none of them’ is also monotone decreasing. This should not be necessary, since anti-additive expressions are a subset of the monotone decreasing ones (van der Wouden 1998:99).

predicative definite NPis. Hence, predicative definite NPis are NPis of medium strength.

The negative adverb *aldri* ‘never’ and the negative verb *tvile på* ‘doubt’ also license all the NPis in our set, and as we now might expect, *aldri* and *tvile på* are anti-additive:

(66)a. Ho røykte eller drakk aldri.  
*she smoked or drank never*  
 ‘She never smoked or drank.’

⇔ b. Ho røykte aldri og ho drakk aldri.  
*she smoked never and she drank never*  
 ‘She never smoked and she never drank.’

(67)a. Eg tvilar på at ho røykte eller drakk.  
*I doubt on that she smoked or drank*  
 ‘I doubt that she smoked or drank.’

⇔ b. Eg tvilar på at ho røykte og eg tvilar på at  
*I doubt on that she smoked and I doubt on that*  
*ho drakk.*  
*she drank*  
 ‘I doubt that she smoked and I doubt that she drank.’

In fact, van der Wouden (1997:108) claims that all verbs with negative properties are anti-additive. They are never weaker, i.e. only monotone decreasing, and never stronger. But the problem is that for example the verb *angre* ‘regret’ does not license predicative definite NPis, although it licenses the weak NPI *noe som helst* ‘anything at all’:

(68) Ho angrar på at ho sa noe som helst.  
*she regret on that she said anything at all*  
 ‘She regrets that she said anything at all.’

(69) \* Ho angrar på at ho gikk lange turen.  
*she regrets on that she walked long.DEF trip.DEF*  
 Intended meaning: ‘She regrets that she walked a long distance.’

Here, van der Wouden’s classification seems to fail (but note that the contrast in (68)–(69) would also be a problem for Progovac).

Moreover, as van der Wouden (1997:159) points out, the tests he has proposed for the various types of negativity are not directly applicable to questions, although it is a well-known fact that polarity questions can be



NPI licensors. He notes, though, that since questions license weak NPIs and NPIs of medium strength, but not strong NPIs, it seems that questions should be associated with the medium type of negation, i.e. regular negation.<sup>15</sup> Still, the negative bias that we get in some cases is unexplained.

As for conditionals, van der Wouden (1997:163) suggests that the reason why conditionals can license NPIs is that conditionals are monotone decreasing system-internally, as he calls it, with reference to Kas (1993). System-internally means here that the inferences are made strictly on the basis of data found within the inferential system itself. This would explain why conditionals are not able to license predicative definite NPIs, since, as we have seen, more than just downward monotonicity is required to license these expressions. The problem still remains, however, that in van der Wouden's model it is not entirely clear what the mechanisms are that enable polarity questions and conditional clauses to act as NPI licensors.

#### 6.4 Giannakidou (1998)

The problem with showing that interrogatives and conditionals are monotone decreasing is among the factors that lead Giannakidou (1998) to reject downward monotonicity as the key concept for NPI licensing. Instead, she proposes that licensing contexts for polarity sensitive elements in general are characterised by being *nonveridical*. To put it simply, a propositional operator is nonveridical if *Op p* does not entail *p* in some individual's epistemic model (see Giannakidou 1998:106). This approach tackles questions and conditional clauses directly: neither questions nor conditionals preserve the truth of the propositions involved or require that these propositions be true in the context (see Giannakidou 1998:130–134 for a more detailed treatment). Hence, they are nonveridical, and their ability to license polarity sensitive elements follows. For determiners and quantifiers, being nonveridical in a context means, in Giannakidou's terms, not requiring that the

<sup>15</sup> I have left strong NPIs and their licensors, called *classical negation* by van der Wouden (1997), out of the discussion, since these concepts do not seem to be relevant for predicative definite NPIs. I can however, for the sake of illustration, give one example of a strong NPI in Norwegian. The superlative form *verst*, literally meaning 'worst', is also an NPI that in the combination *ikkje verst* 'not bad' can get an understatement reading, so that *ikkje verst* then means 'quite good':

- (i) Sausen var ikkje verst.  
       *sauce.DEF was not worst*  
       'The sauce wasn't worst.' OR 'The sauce wasn't bad (it was quite good).'

But if *ikkje* 'not' is replaced by *aldri* 'never', only the literal reading of *verst* is available:

- (ii) Sausen var aldri verst.  
       *sauce.DEF was never worst*  
       'The sauce was never worst.'

Hence, it seems that *verst* with the understatement reading is a strong NPI.

denotation of the NP argument is nonempty in that context (Giannakidou 1998:121). She further states that determiners and quantifiers that are downward entailing, which is another term for monotone decreasing/downward monotonic, are also necessarily nonveridical (Giannakidou 1998:122).

A subset of the class of polarity sensitive elements put stronger requirements on their licensors, according to Giannakidou, in that they can only appear in contexts that are *antiveridical*. Antiveridicality is a special case of nonveridicality; for a propositional operator it is the property of entailing  $\neg p$  when applied to  $p$  (Giannakidou 1998:106). For determiners and quantifiers, antiveridicality is not relevant, she argues, since no determiners or quantifiers require that their NP argument must be empty. For example, *No students talked* does not entail that there were no students, only that there were no students who talked (Giannakidou 1998:122).

Another important ingredient of Giannakidou's model is the concept of *indirect licensing*. A polarity sensitive element is indirectly licensed if it appears in a context that does not contain any element that in itself induces nonveridicality, but which nevertheless allows nonveridical or even antiveridical implicatures to be inferred (Giannakidou 1998:146ff.; see also the discussion in Giannakidou 2006). For example, building on Sadock (1971, 1974) Giannakidou (1998) proposes that rhetorical questions are semantically equivalent to assertions of the opposite polarity. Hence, the positive rhetorical question in (70a) (her example (127b), p. 147) equals the negative assertion in (70b) (her example (128b), p. 147):

- (70)a. Who gives a damn about what you think?
- b. Nobody gives a damn about what you think.

From this point of view, a positive rhetorical question gives rise to antiveridical inferences, and because of this, it will be able to license certain polarity sensitive elements.

The abovementioned properties form the basis of Giannakidou's classification of polarity sensitive elements. In her system, *weak* polarity sensitive elements are licensed in any context that is directly or indirectly nonveridical. *Strong* polarity sensitive elements are licensed in contexts that are directly or indirectly antiveridical, whereas *superstrong* polarity sensitive elements are only licensed in contexts that are directly antiveridical (Giannakidou 1998:156). This is summarised in table 3.

<i>Type</i>	Licensed by	DIRECTLY	INDIRECTLY
Weak	nonveridicality	yes	yes
Strong	antiveridicality	yes	yes
Superstrong	antiveridicality	yes	no

Table 3: Giannakidou's classification of polarity items (Giannakidou 1998:156)

If we now turn to our test battery again, *aldri* 'never' is an antiveridical operator, and consequently, it is expected that it should license all the NPIs in our test set. More telling is the fact that polarity questions with predicative definite NPIs tend to have a rhetorical flavour. While plain polarity questions are nonveridical, rhetorical questions are indirectly antiveridical, as noted above. Hence, if an NPI pushes a question towards a rhetorical interpretation, this suggests that the NPI is strong—it requires an antiveridical context rather than one that is merely nonveridical. If this reasoning is correct, we can conclude that predicative definite NPIs are strong NPIs in Giannakidou's system.

As for *tvile på* 'doubt', it seems at first glance to be only nonveridical, not antiveridical. Its ability to license predicative definite NPIs would then speak against the assumption that predicative definite NPIs are strong NPIs. But note that *tvile på* can arguably come with antiveridical inferences, which enable this verb to license strong NPIs. More specifically, *tvile på p* can be understood as [NOT believe p], which implicates [believe NOT p] (if we assume that neg-raising has taken place, see Horn 1975). Hence, NPIs embedded under *tvile på* are licensed via the negative implicature. If this is correct, the claim that predicative definite NPIs are strong NPIs can be maintained.

The same line of reasoning also applies to *ingen av dei* 'none of them'. Although determiners and quantifiers are never antiveridical, according to Giannakidou, the fact that predicative definite NPIs are licensed by *ingen av dei*, but not by *nesten ingen* 'almost nobody' or *få av dei* 'few of them', should be connected to the negative implicatures associated with *ingen av dei*. In this respect, *ingen av dei* contrasts with *nesten ingen* and *få av dei*, which are at best nonveridical; they are clearly not antiveridical.

Giannakidou's approach also appears to give the right predictions concerning predicative definite NPIs in conditional clauses. According to Giannakidou (1998:131), factive conditionals are nonveridical by virtue of being nonassertive. It follows that predicative definite NPIs, if they really are strong NPIs according to Giannakidou's classification, should not be licensed by factive conditionals. This is consistent with the facts.

Counterfactual conditionals, by contrast, are claimed to give rise to antiveridical inferences in their antecedents (Giannakidou 1998:148). If this is right, counterfactual conditionals should license predicative definite NPis. What we find is however that predicative definite NPis in counterfactual conditional clauses give variable results:

- (71)a. \* Viss ho hadde vori store jenta, så kunne ho fått  
           if she had been big.DEF girl.DEF so could she got  
           bli med.  
           come with  
           Intended meaning: ‘If she had been a big girl, she could have come along.’
- b. ?\*Viss dei hadde gått lange turen, så hadde vi  
           if they had walked long.DEF trip.DEF so had we  
           hørt om det.  
           heard about it  
           ‘If they had walked a long distance, we would have heard about it.’
- c. ? Viss dei hadde hatt store sjansane, så ville eg  
           if they had had big.DEF/PL chances.DEF so would I  
           visst det.  
           known it  
           ‘If they had had any big chances, I would have known.’

As indicated, (71a) is completely ungrammatical, whereas (71c) is only slightly marked, and (71b) lies somewhere in between. Since all three examples involve a predicative definite NPI inside a counterfactual conditional clause, the perceived differences in grammaticality must be due to other factors. Hence, it seems that a counterfactual conditional in itself, with its antiveridical implicature, can license a predicative definite NPI, but that other factors may interfere to make the construction less acceptable.

### 6.5 Summary

In sum, when the licensing requirements of predicative definite NPis are examined in light of the models proposed by Progovac (1994), van der Wouden (1997) and Giannakidou (1998), it appears that neither of these models can directly explain the results.

Progovac’s proposal runs into problems with predicative definite NPis, and also with idiomatic NPis, since NPis of both types have properties that are contradictory in her model. Van der Wouden’s model fares somewhat

better, but offers no real explanation for the licensing properties of verbs, questions and conditionals. Licensing of NPIs in questions and conditionals fall out logically in Giannakidou's model, and it can also explain why predicative definite NPIs trigger a negatively biased reading when they appear in questions. The variation that we see when predicative definite NPIs combine with negative nominal phrases and with counterfactual conditionals does not follow directly from Giannakidou's model, but it seems to be consistent with the model if we take into account that only some negative nominal phrases come with antiveridical implicatures, and attribute the variation in counterfactual conditionals to other factors.

## 7. Conclusions

In this paper, we have seen that the Norwegian predicative definite NPI is a templatic NPI, which means that the choice of lexical items to build it from is free within certain limits. It is also exceptional among Norwegian nominal phrases in having a suffixed definiteness marker on the noun while a preposed definiteness marker may not appear, despite the obligatory presence of a prenominal modifier. I have proposed that the reason why there is no preposed definiteness marker is that the D-projection is missing. Without a D head, the definiteness feature found in lower projections does not make the phrase referential. But the definiteness feature conflicts with the absence of D, and the consequence is that the phrase has a very limited distribution. In other words, the absence of D and the presence of a definiteness feature cause the phrase to be an NPI.

If we apply the classification of NPIs proposed by Israel (2001), predicative definite NPIs are attenuating NPIs representing a positive scalar value. That is, they belong to the same class as *much* and *all that*. And like these quantificational NPIs, predicative definite NPIs are regularly used in understatement, in effect expressing a low scalar value.

As for their external syntax, predicative definite NPIs can be predicates, adverbials and objects, as long as they are in the scope of their licenser. They can also seemingly be subjects, but notably, just like other nominals lacking the D-projection, they cannot be subjects of agentive verbs or appear in dedicated subject position. The latter restriction does not apply to all Norwegian NPIs, so in this respect, predicative definite NPIs are special.

Finally, it appears that none of the existing models for NPI-licensing gives exactly the right result when applied to predicative definite NPIs, at least not directly. The most successful of the three models considered here is Giannakidou (1998), but even this model appears to need some refinement in order to capture the licensing of predicative definite NPIs.

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